

to Blair's charade. The IG allowed it to go on and on. Countless man-hours and millions of dollars were wasted on cooking the books and on vicious infighting instead of productive problem-solving to right the ship. Mr. Coleman and the GAO got that done.

On March 23, the day before the IG's final exit briefing with the GAO, came a bolt from the blue. The IG stepped forward with a brave, bold announcement. The clean opinion was formally withdrawn. It was like a rush of fresh air in a very stuffy room. The inescapable truth finally dawned on Inspector General Rymer. So I want to thank Mr. Rymer for having the courage to do the right thing.

An audit failure of this magnitude should have consequences. This one is especially egregious. It leaves at least one former Secretary of Defense with egg on his face. Mr. Blair was removed as head of the Audit Office on June 10 but is still serving as the Office of Inspector General's Deputy Chief of Staff. He is the chief architect of the now discredited clean opinion. He is the one who planted the seeds of destruction when he allegedly quashed the audit team's disclaimer. Of course, those responsible for what happened ought to be held accountable.

Mr. Blair wants us to believe that the muffed opinion was the result of a routine dispute between opposing auditors' judgments over evidence, a mere difference of opinion among auditors. True, it reflects an unresolved dispute between the audit team and the management, and yes, that happened; however, there is a right way and a wrong way to resolve the conflicts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to complete this. I was told I would be given the time to do it, and I have about 4 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I won't object, I want to make certain that after Senator GRASSLEY has completed his remarks, I will have time to make my remarks for up to 15 minutes. It will probably be less than that.

Is that all right, Senator?

Mr. GRASSLEY. That is OK.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Those responsible for what happened ought to be held accountable.

Mr. Blair wants us to believe the muffed opinion was the result of a routine dispute between opposing auditors' judgments over evidence and a mere difference of opinion among auditors. True, it reflects an unresolved dispute between the audit team and management, and yes, that happened; however, there is a right way and a wrong way to resolve such conflicts. According to audit standards cited in the GAO report, the dispute should have been addressed, resolved, and documented in

workpapers before the report was issued. It was not because the two opinions were irreconcilable.

The team's disclaimer was based on evidence measured against standards documented in workpapers. Blair's so-called "professional preference," by comparison, is none of these things. As the GAO's evidence gap suggests, Mr. Blair's opinion was hooked up to nothing. It was unsupported, and it was improper. So plain old common sense should have caused senior managers to realize that issuing the report with the opinion hanging fire was a senseless blunder. Doing it had one inevitable result: The opinion had no credibility, and that opinion had to go.

True, the integrity of the Office of Inspector General audit process may be damaged, but the final outcome of this tangled mess may help clear the way for recovery. That recovery ought to lead us to being able to have clean audits not only of the Marine Corps but all of the four services. The Marine Corps audit was the first big one out the box. If Inspector General Rymer had not embraced the truth, we might be staring at a bunch of worthless opinions awarded to the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The Department of Defense could have declared victory and buried the broken bookkeeping system for another 100 years.

Hopefully, the Defense Department will begin anew with fresh respect for the truth, audit standards, and the need for reliable transaction data. Reliable transaction data is the lifeblood of credible financial statements. Unreliable transaction data doomed the Marine Corps audit to failure from the get-go. Without reliable transaction data, the probability of conducting a successful audit of a major component is near zero.

With the right leadership and guidance, a plan with achievable deadlines can and should be developed. In the meantime, we watchdogs—and that is all of us in the Congress of the United States, or at least it ought to be all of us—must remain vigilant. My gut tells me we are still not out of the woods.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

CYBERSECURITY INFORMATION SHARING ACT OF 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 754, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 28, S. 754, a bill to improve cybersecurity in the United States through enhanced sharing of information about cybersecurity threats, and for other purposes.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, on November 19, 1863, standing on the blood-stained battlefield of Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln delivered one of the most significant and best remembered speeches in American history. At the conclusion of the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln stated "that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain . . . that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom . . . and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

In the year 2015, with a political campaign finance system that is corrupt and increasingly controlled by billionaires and special interests, I fear very much that, in fact, government of the people, by the people, and for the people is perishing in the United States of America.

Five years ago, in the disastrous Citizens United Supreme Court decision, by a 5-to-4 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court said to the wealthiest people in this country: Billionaires, you already own much of the American economy. Now we are going to give you the opportunity to purchase the U.S. Government, the White House, the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House, Governors' seats, legislatures, and State judicial branches as well. In essence, that is exactly what they said, and, in fact, that is exactly what is happening as we speak.

As a result of Citizens United, during this campaign cycle, billions of dollars from the wealthiest people in this country will flood the political process. Super PACs—a direct outgrowth of the Citizens United decision—enabled the wealthiest people and the largest corporations to contribute unlimited amounts of money to campaigns. According to recent FEC filings, super PACs have raised more than \$300 million for the 2016 Presidential election already, and this election cycle has barely begun. This \$300 million is more than 11 times what was raised at this point in the 2000 election cycle. What will the situation be 4 years from now? What will the situation be 8 years from now? How many billions and billions of dollars from the wealthy and powerful will be used to elect candidates who represent the rich and the superrich?

According to the Sunlight Foundation, more than \$2 out of every \$3 raised for Presidential candidates so far is going to super PACs and not to the candidate's own campaign. This is quite extraordinary. What this means is that super PACs, which theoretically operate independently of the actual candidate, have more money and more influence over the candidate's campaign than the candidate himself or herself. Let me repeat that. The millionaires and billionaires who control